

\$57 million grant helps city move forward with State-Lake 'L' station rehab

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On the heels of the new Washington-Wabash “L” station opening downtown, the city announced this week that it has secured \$57 million in federal funding as it inches toward a long-discussed plan to rebuild the Loop’s second-busiest elevated station, at State and Lake streets.

“This project has been talked about for more than a decade, and now we are moving forward on plans to rebuild this station and ensure a modern and reliable transit system for Chicago’s residents,” Mayor Rahm Emanuel was quoted as saying in a statement this week.

The city hasn’t set dates to begin and complete construction and has yet to put together designs for the new station. But city officials say that when it’s all over, a modern and polished State-Lake station — which serves as a hub to five rail lines and has more than 3.1 million annual entries — will be wheelchair-accessible with wider platforms similar to the newly constructed Washington/Wabash station, which opened in August.

During the planning process, officials will look at ways to connect the elevated State-Lake to the Red Line’s subway stop. Currently, anyone using the State-Lake station has to go to ground level and enter the subway to reach the Red Line.

The Chicago Theater is seen to the right of the State-Lake “L” station in the Loop in September 2017. (Kamil Krzaczynski / Chicago Tribune)

City officials say they have not calculated the total cost for renovating the 122-year-old station and have yet to begin the design process for the new station. But they say the total costs could exceed the \$75 million spent on the Washington-Wabash station.

On Thursday, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning on Thursday approved a \$56.9 million grant from the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program for design and construction. That’s in addition to the city’s existing \$5.5 million design funding. Officials say the city will seek additional federal money for construction.

The State-Lake renovation is the latest push by the city to make some of the system’s oldest and most dilapidated stations more accessible and rider-friendly. This includes the construction of the Morgan Street station for the Green and Pink lines in 2012 and the Cermak-McCormick Place Green Line station in 2015. The city also has the “Walk to Transit” project to improve pedestrian safety and access to 10 CTA stations.

The city's Department of Transportation will oversee the project for the Chicago Transit Authority and hopes to issue requests for proposals by the end of the year. Once it's done, officials said, the city will have a clearer timetable for the station's construction.

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